

Message Text

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10

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 SAB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 EUR-25 AF-10 SAM-01 DRC-01 /139 W

----- 050674

R 211536Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1926

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

USINT DAMASCUS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 1674

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR IS EG SY

SUBJ: RABIN'S VIEWS ON MDEAST NEGOTIATIONS

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD, GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

SUMMARY. YITZHAK RABIN, FORMER AMBASSADOR TO US AND PRESENTLY MINISTER OF LABOR, IN MARCH 15 MAARIV INTERVIEW PROVIDED PESSIMISTIC ASSESSMENT OF SYRIAN AND EGYPTIAN OBJECTIVES AND SOVIET MIDEAST POLICY. THRUST OF RABIN'S ARGUMENT IS THAT GOI WILL FACE PRESSURES IN MONTHS AHEAD FROM US TO PROCEED WITH SIGNIFICANT TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS BUT THAT, DESPITE CHANGE IN EGYPTIAN ATMOSPHERICS, BASIC, ARAB AND SOVIET OBJECTIVES REMAIN INIMICAL TO ISRAEL. END SUMMARY.

1. YITZHAK RABIN, IN LENGTHY HEBREW LANGUAGE INTERVIEW, HAS PROVIDED RATHER SOPHISTICATED ANALYSIS FROM ISRAELI VIEWPOINT CURRENT MIDEAST NEGOTIATING SCENE, MAIN POINTS OF WHICH ARE SUMMARIZED BELOW.

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2. EGYPT. RABIN STATED THAT SADAT'S OBJECTIVES HAVE NOT CHANGED SINCE HIS 1971 REPLY TO THE JARRING MEMORANDUM WHICH INCLUDED DEMANDS FOR A) TOTAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM SINAI AND B) RESTORATION OF THE LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIANS. INsofar AS SADAT NOW SEEKS A POLITICAL RATHER THAN A MILITARY PATH, IT IS BECAUSE OCTOBER WAR ON ONE HAND RESTORED EGYPTIAN SELF-RESPECT WHILE ON OTHER IT RECONFIRMED IMPOSSIBILITY OF ATTAINING HIS POLITICAL OBJECTIVES BY MILITARY MEANS ALONE. SADAT BELIEVES THAT EGYPT NOW CAN AFFORD TO SHOW GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN ITS POLITICAL APPROACH.

3. EGYPT AND THE SUPERPOWERS. RABIN STATED THAT SADAT WANTS TO MAINTAIN VIABLE RELATIONS WITH BOTH US AND USSR, THE FORMER IN ORDER TO PRESSURE ISRAEL INTO MAKING TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS AND THE LATTER TO CONTINUE BUILDING EGYPTIAN MILITARY CAPABILITY IN CASE WAR IS RESUMED. WHILE "CENTER OF GRAVITY" OF EGYPTIAN POLICY KEEPS CHANGING, SADAT INTENDS TO PRESERVE HIS POLITICAL OPTION THROUGH US AND HIS MILITARY OPTION THROUGH USSR.

4. EGYPT AND SYRIA. RABIN STATED THAT EGYPT'S "WAY" WAS NOT DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF SYRIA; RATHER THEY ARE PURSUING COMMON OBJECTIVES THROUGH DIFFERENT TACTICS. AT PRESENT SADAT ACTS AS MODERATING INFLUENCE ON ASAD, RECOGNIZING THAT HE CANNOT ACHIEVE EGYPTIAN OBJECTIVES WITHOUT COORDINATING HIS MOVES WITH SYRIA. ACCORDING TO RABIN, SADAT PERSUADED ASAD TO AGREE TO US MEDIATION IN WASINGTON DESPITE SOVIET PRESSURE ON HIM TO DEMAND THAT VENUE OF TALKS BE MOVED TO GENEVA.

5. ISRAELI-SYRIAN DISENGAGEMENT. RABIN ARGUED THAT ASAD WILL HAVE DIFFICULTY IN ACCEPTING LESS THAN WHAT EGYPT ACHIEVED THROUGH DISENGAGEMENT--IDF WITHDRAWAL FROM POSITIONS IT HELD SINCE SIX DAY WAR. ASAD WILL NOT BE SATISFIED WITH SETTLEMENT BASED ON LESS THAN WITHDRAWAL TO LINE DIFFERENT FROM THE VIOLET LINE FIXED AT END OF SIX DAY WAR. ISRAEL MUST EXPECT SHORT WAR OF ATTRITION ON NORTHERN FRONT AS INSEPARABLE PART OF NEGOTIATING PROCESS. FROM ISRAELI VIEWPOINT DISENGAGEMENT WITH SYRIA IS MORE DIFFICULT THAN WITH EGYPT NOT ONLY BECUASE OF DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATIONS BUT BECAUSE SYRIA "KEEPS HARPING AND EMPHASIZING" THAT HER WAR AIM IS LIQUIDATION OF ISRAEL AS JEWISH STATE. FOR SYRIANS, THERE IS HARDLY ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "LIBERATIONS" OF GOLAN HEIGHTS
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AND "LIBERATION" OF HAIFA. WITHOUT GOING INTO EGYPT'S "REAL INTENTIONS" RABIN SAYS, EGYPT AT LEAST MADE A CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN RETURN TO JUNE 4, 1967 LINES AND LIQUIDATION OF ISRAEL AS JEWISH STATE.

6. NEXT STAGE OF EGYPTIAN DIPLOMACY. RABIN ARGUED THAT, IF ISRAEL-SYRIAN DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT IS ATTAINED, SADAT WILL DEMAND IMMEDIATE FURTHER IDF WITHDRAWAL FROM SINAI.

NEXT STAGE OF ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN TALKS WILL TAKE PLACE UNDER CONSTANT EGYPTIAN WAR THREAT DESPITE UNEF PRESENCE IN BUFFER ZONE. QUOTE ALL THE ARRANGEMENTS LAID DOWN IN THE CEASEFIRE WILL NOT DO AWAY WITH THREATS AND EVEN ACTUAL RESUMPTION OF FIGHTING IF AND WHEN EGYPTIANS DESPAIR OF ACHIEVING A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT COMPATIBLE WITH THEIR DECLARED AIMS, AND IF EGYPT BELIEVES THAT IT HAS MILITARY POWER AND POLITICAL BACKING TO RESUME WAR. END QUOTE.

7. SOVIET MIDEAST POLICY. RABIN STATED THAT, GIVEN SOVIET DISSATISFACTION WITH PRIMACY OF US ROLE IN NEGOTIATIONS SO FAR, SOVIET UNION IS CERTAIN TO BECOME MORE RIGID CONCERNING TERMS OF POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. SOVIETS WILL BE "BELLOWS" FANNING MIDEAST CONFLICT BY PREVENTING EGYPTIAN CONCESSIONS OR SOFTENING OF SYRIAN STAND. SOVIET UNION IS PREPARED TO INCREASE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF MILITARY AID, KEEPING SYRIAN AND EGYPTIAN MILITARY OPTIONS OPEN.

8. ISRAELI POLICY. ISRAEL WILL HAVE TO REMAIN IN STATE ON CONSTANT ALERT FOR ANY MILITARY EXIGENCIES TO PREVENT EGYPT AND SYRIA FROM "NURSING ANY ILLUSIONS" ABOUT THEIR MILITARY OPTION. SHIFTING TO SLIGHTLY MORE OPTIMISTIC NOTE, RABIN STATED THAT POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT INEVITABLY WILL REQUIRE TIME, PROVIDING ISRAEL AND WORLD WITH OPPORTUNITY TO EXAMINE EXTENT TO WHICH EGYPT INTENDS TO IMPLEMENT ITS DECLARED INTENTION TO REOPEN SUEZ CANAL AND REHABILITATE CANAL CITIES. IF DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT WITH SYRIA IS ACHIEVED AND IMPLEMENTED, AND THEREAFTER EGYPT ENTERS INTO NEGOTIATIONS FOR OVERALL SETTLEMENT AND PROVES HER INTENTION TO GIVE UP IDEA OF WAR, "WE SHALL BE ABLE TO BE CALMER AND MORE CONFIDENT ABOUT CHANCES OF A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT."

9. US-USSR DETENTE. ON IMPACT OF DETENTE POLICY ON MIDEAST CONFLICT, RABIN STATED THAT ISRAELI SHOULD NOT OVERSIMPLIFY SOVIET-CONFIDENTIAL

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AMERICAN RELATIONS TO CRUDE CHOICE BETWEEN COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING OR MAJOR EXPLOSION. IN MIDEAST EACH SIDE IS TRYING TO ACHIEVE MAXIMUM WITHOUT ENDANGERING CURRENT RAPPROCHEMENT. SECRETARY WILL TRY TO REACH UNDERSTANDING AND PERHAPS AN AGREEMENT WITH SOVIETS TO DEFUSE MIDDLE EAST. QUOTE. I ASSUME THAT KISSINGER WILL TRY TO HARNESS THE RUSSIANS TO HELP REACH A SETTLEMENT WITH SYRIAN SO THAT OBSTACLES SHOULD BE REMOVED FROM FURTHER POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS. WITHIN THIS FRAMEWORK OF INTERESTS, ONE MAY EXPECT A US EFFORT TO DEMAND FROM ISRAEL HER 'CONTRIBUTION'. UNQUOTE.

10. COMMENT. WE BELIEVE THAT RABIN'S COMMENTS ARE NOTEWORTHY AS ACCURATE SUMMARY OF CURRENT ISRAELI PERCEPTION OF ARAB INTENTIONS, AND ANXIETIES ABOUT IMPLICATIONS OF NEGOTIATIONS FOR LONGER RUN. THEY ALSO UNDERScore ISRAELI PREFERENCE FOR SLOWING DOWN

PACE OF NEGOTIATIONS AFTER ISRAELI-SYRIAN DISENGAGEMENT. WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT RABIN'S VIEWS CAN BE EXPECTED TO HAVE BEARING ON GOI DECISION-MAKING PROCESS ON ARAB-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS, AND THAT IN ADDITION TO HIS RESPONSIBILITIES AS MINISTER OF LABOR, HE WILL CONTINUE TO DEVOTE HIS ATTENTION TO MAJOR FOREIGNPOLICY ISSUES WHICH LIE AHEAD.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, NEGOTIATIONS, MUTUAL FORCE WITHDRAWALS, MILITARY AGREEMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 MAR 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974TELAV01674
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740061-0176
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740324/aaaaawvv.tel
Line Count: 176
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <18 JUN 2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <03 FEB 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RABIN'S VIEWS ON MDEAST NEGOTIATIONS BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD, GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL
TAGS: PFOR, IS, EG, SY, UR, (RABIN, YITZHAK)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005